



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2026

Downtown London BIA Awarded Outstanding Achievements at 2026 OBIAA Awards Night

Awards highlight leadership in member engagement, economic resilience, and downtown activation

LONDON - The Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) hosted the 2026 BIA Awards Gala on Monday, April 20, celebrating excellence and innovation across Ontario's BIA's. This year's theme, In Full Bloom, recognized the role BIAs play in building resilient, inclusive, and economically vibrant communities.

With a record-breaking 66 submissions, the 2026 BIA Awards honoured organizations demonstrating leadership in strengthening local economies across the province.

Against this competitive provincial backdrop, Downtown London BIA was recognized with three awards for its work in member engagement, economic resilience, and experiential programming.

Downtown London's success at the 2026 BIA Awards

Business Retention, Recruitment & Expansion - Award of Excellence

Downtown London - Member Growth Kit

The Member Growth Kit is a comprehensive lifecycle engagement program designed to support businesses from opening through long-term growth. The initiative provides consistent onboarding, including welcome packages, in-person visits, and grand opening celebrations, while also recognizing established businesses through anniversary milestones.

By combining onboarding, marketing, levy education, and branded materials into one structured system, the program strengthens relationships, improves awareness of BIA services, and increases visibility for downtown businesses.

In its first year, the program supported 50 new businesses, delivered 23 grand openings and 19 anniversary celebrations, and generated more than 2.5 million social media views highlighting downtown businesses.

Economic Resilience & Community Building - Award of Merit

Downtown London - Downtown London Walking Tours



The Downtown London Walking Tours program connects municipal decision-makers directly with on-the-ground conditions in the downtown core. Through structured tours with councillors and city leadership, the initiative brings policy discussions into real spaces.

By pairing firsthand experience with open dialogue and public transparency, the tours strengthen alignment between the City and the business community while building trust and accountability.

The program has contributed to more informed decision-making and tangible outcomes, including policy changes influenced by direct feedback from downtown businesses.

Special Events - Award of Merit

Downtown London - Popping Up with Downtown London

Popping Up with Downtown London is an on-site engagement series that brings the BIA directly into major office towers to connect with downtown workers.

In 2025, the program delivered five pop-up events, engaged hundreds of workers, collected nearly 300 survey responses, and expanded the BIA's reach through newsletter sign-ups and direct interaction.

Quote from Board Chair Kristin Nielsen:

"It's incredibly rewarding to see Downtown London recognized across multiple areas of our work," said Kristin Nielsen. "These awards reflect a strong focus on supporting our members, strengthening relationships with the City, and creating a more resilient and vibrant downtown."

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Photo caption:

Pictured from left to right are **Vicki Smith**, Interim Executive Director and **Judith Smith**, Manger of Public Realm & Activations of Downtown London BA, at St. Catherines, ON".

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About Downtown London

Downtown London is the catalyst and connector for a shared community vision of London's downtown, on behalf of members, in partnership with the City of London and in support of major economic development, cultural, educational, and private sector stakeholders.

Our mission is to steward the levy paid by member businesses by leading and championing programs and investments that make London's downtown a destination of choice and an economic centre that supports the entire community.

About OBIAA

OBIAA is the network that represents unique and vibrant BIAs across Ontario. The Association supports and advocates on behalf of its members through the building and nurturing of strong relationships and partnerships. OBIAA is a leader in the development and sharing of information, tools, resources, and best practices, and is the ONE voice on common issues.